

# Introduction

journal or publication title	世界の日本研究 2003: THE STUDY OF JAPAN IN AUSTRALIA - A Unique Development over Eighty Years
volume	10
page range	9-10
year	2003-05-30
URL	<a href="http://doi.org/10.15055/00003831">http://doi.org/10.15055/00003831</a>

## Introduction

Australia ranks second in the world, after Korea, in the number of people learning the Japanese language. Over four hundred and thirty thousand (430,000) Australians currently study Japanese.<sup>1</sup> Amongst the Western nations, Australia's lead is remarkable. The United States, which immediately follows Australia in its Japanese learning population outside Asian nations, holds only a little over one hundred and ten thousand (approx. 113,000) Japanese learners, one quarter of that of Australia. On per-capita basis, one out of every forty four (44) Australians learns Japanese, as compared with one out of approximately two thousand and four hundred (2,400) Americans.<sup>2</sup>

The study of Japan in Australia has now achieved a unique status amongst the nations outside Japan. Australia's international prominence in this field comes not only from the size of the Japanese learning population, but also from the academic and educational initiatives that the nation has taken in guiding, supporting and sustaining the growth. In Australia, the study of Japan has long been spread beyond the confines of academia and Japan specialists. Learning about Japan, acquiring Japanese language and literacy have become a legitimate part of the Australian education system all through primary to the tertiary level.

Why has Australia, with her cultural heritage still deeply rooted in the West, achieved such a remarkable status in the study of Japan? This study has been undertaken to trace the 80 year history of Australia's study of Japan in its entirety, and to portray the uniqueness of its development, which has led the country to its present status.

In Australia today, the majority of Japanese learners are found at pre-tertiary levels, that is, at both primary and secondary school education. This study, however, looks at the situation through the initiatives taken by university academia. Historically, Australia's study of Japan began at university level. University academia today remains the predominant influence in guiding the direction of Japanese studies in Australia and in cultivating Japan skills and literacy in the nation in educational terms.

Japanese studies at universities perform, as does any other academic discipline, two major functions, research and education. Throughout this study, focus will be on the education side of the activities. Australia considers languages, and literacy to go with each of them, as part of its national resources. In the case of the study of Japan, the consideration to develop Japan skills and literacy, in order to deal effectively with Japan, has never been far away, at any period of its history. Education brings forth the largest impact on the nation's Japan skills and literacy and, consequently, on its readiness in dealing with Japan. The nation owes much to Japanese academia for the educational initiatives it has provided throughout the history.

This report divides the 80 year history into six chapters in chronological order. Chapter 1 will look at the earliest period from the commencement of Japanese teaching in Australia until World War II, and Chapter 2 from the end of the War to the 1970s, when the first sign of expansion occurred. Chapter 3 will look at the period of 1970s and 1980s, Chapter 4, the remarkable growth period of the late 1980s to early 1990s, and Chapter 5 examines the development in the 1990s. Finally, Chapter 6 surveys some of the issues which pose challenges to Japanese academia today.

Research resources for this study have been found mostly in Australia. Literature has been selected from the latest available materials; particularly those published in the past five years, where applicable. For investigation into the earlier history, however, the author is indebted to the valuable resources found in the Australian Archives.

In addition to the literature studies, the author's own experiences and personal knowledge, gained through developing the Japanese studies program at Macquarie University, Sydney, have substantially contributed to the research. The author is also very grateful to colleagues in Japanese studies academia in Australia. The interaction with each of them has provided the author with invaluable opportunities to develop further insight into each issue.